Met Office

NEWS

# How long will the cold conditions last?

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## It's not unusual to experience cold conditions in February – the last month of meteorological winter.

The current cold weather is being influenced by a polar maritime air mass with its origins over Canada. This is expected to continue affecting the UK for much of the next week, with only brief milder interludes affecting southern parts of the country.

For an insight into the longer-term prospects, our meteorologists are monitoring the stratosphere – a high layer in the atmosphere above the region containing most of our weather. Initial observations are recording a warming of the stratosphere over the North Pole, suggesting an atmospheric event known as Sudden Stratospheric Warming is about to occur, where the stratospheric temperature can rise by 50 °C. When this event has occurred previously it has often led to cold conditions across the UK, linked to a weakening of the polar jet stream – the high-altitude ribbon of air which steers weather systems towards us from the Atlantic.

Matthew Lewis is a Deputy Chief Operational Meteorologist. He said: "A Sudden Stratospheric Warming event is now expected to occur and will peak over the coming week. The resulting impact on the weather in the UK is still hugely uncertain, but there are some signs of conditions that an easterly flow could develop across Europe. Although we wouldn't expect continuously cold conditions there is a greater chance of cold conditions recurring."

Prof. Adam Scaife provides a detailed explanation of the conditions which can lead to Sudden Stratospheric Warming.

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